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ABSTRACT

The experience of the New York Association of Child Care Workers (ACCW) in implementing and further developing over a 4-year period a statewide program for certifying child caregivers is described in this paper. The certification program is discussed in three sections. After the first section's brief introductory statement, the second section, entitled "What To Do," lists actions taken to build the certification program. These actions are classified according to three phases of program development: "grandfathering" (or original certification at the level of baseline criteria), undertaken from 1976 to 1978; upgrading (raising requirements for certification), conducted during 1978 to 1979; and developing (involving issues such as provisional certification and inter-state reciprocity), undertaken from 1980 to 1981. In the third section, entitled "How To Do It," program development activities related to each of the three phases are described. Topics discussed include, among others, fees, deadlines for application, ethics, recognition of approved candidates, examinations, recertification, provisional certification, and national standards. Related materials, such as a list of the ACCW's certification requirements and an application for certification, are appended. (RH)

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"PRAGMATICS OF THE CERTIFICATION/CREDENTIALING PROCESS FOR CHILD CARE WORKERS"

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A paper for the Conference-Research Sequence in Child Care Education, University of Pittsburgh.
December 1981.

Doreen M. Aylward
Chairperson
Credentials Committee
Association of Child Care Workers, Inc.
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Doreen M. Aylward

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to share with all who wish to help professionalize the field of child care, information on how the ACCW, New York, established and implemented the certification process.

Introduction

We began the first program in 1976, and since that time, we have succeeded in certifying approximately one thousand workers. As we all know from watching movies and TV, the life of the pioneers was never easy. Have you ever noticed how, as the wagon train pulls out, everyone is filled with hope, smiling, neatly dressed, clean? The horses are in fine fettle, the wagon is full of supplies, the sun is shining, and off they go on the grand adventure. Over the mountains and into the promised land. Somewhere along the way, little things begin to go wrong. A wheel falls off the wagon. A horse leaps off the cliff. Three people get sick with the pox. The food is stolen. Somebody shoots somebody else. Some turn back, afraid of the journey. Some leave to get help, and are presumabily eaten by bears, as they are never seen again! Around that time, we can also be certain it will start to snow and the survivors will huddle together as wolves gather and coyotes howl! By now they are variously dirty, desperate, hungry, and even going slowly mad. But they have a dream, and they are survivors, and they wait until the weather clears, and they plough on.
What I have described to you is indeed a good outline of a job description for a Certification Committee member. There can be no process of credentialing; nor can we make progress in professionalization; unless we find the people with the guts to hang in and do the job. To all who want to help, I say from my personal experience

and philosophy - get up and get started! We may not live to see the promised land but we will know we helped along the way. To the best of our individual abilities, and in honor of a job we know must be done if services to children are to improve. Therefore - set up a committee, and get going.

This is how we started in New York, and what we did so far. To apply for certification all candidates must be ACCW members in good standing. There were three distinct phases in our experience 1976-81:

They were:
1. Grandfathering 1976-78
2. Upgrading 1978-79
3. Developing 1980-81

Sec. 2 "What To Do"

Steps to Implementation

Many of the tasks will be carried on simultaneously. Do not be discouraged if your experience is not as neat and tidy as the following lists. Neither was our blueprint, but this is essentially what we did as we went along.

Phase 1. "Grandfathering"

Committee A. State Association Board establishes Certification Committee appoints members and defines tasks.

Ethics B. State Association Board establishes Code of Ehtics.

Criteria C. Certification Committee develops qualifications and criteria for "Grandfathering": Sets time limited period. Gains Board approval of plan.

Appeal D. Certification Committee establishes appeal mechanism to Board of Directors.

Scope E. Committee decides whether to review out of state - out of county applications.

Support Systems F. Committee establishes processing procedures, clerical support systems, forms.

Publicity G. Committee publicises plans and

Product H. Prints certificates and applications!

Action I. Starts work on phase 1.

Phase II Upgrading

Upgrading A. Committee upgrades qualifications, recieves approval of State Association Board of Directors.

Examination B. Establishes examinations, procedures and proctering throughout state.

Recertification C. Establishes Re-certification procedures.

Phase III Developing

Provisional Certification A. Committee establishes Provisional Certification criteria and procedures for up keep of system. Obtains approval of State Association Board.

Reciprocity (States) B. Committee examines issues involved in reciprocity. State Association Board actively involved in inter-state discussions.

National Standards C. Committee and State Asc. Board work actively with other state associations on development of National Standards.

Legislation for Licensing D. State Asc. continues efforts through its Legislative Committee to introduce Bill for Licensing of Child Care Workers. A long term goal.

Sec. 3 How To Do It

"Practical Application"

Most people who write "How To" books impress me as having been born with incredible natural talents which led them, almost as homing pigeons, to the "right way". Let me assure you that our committee, being composed of very ordinary members of the ACCW, learned by trial and error. You will undoubtedly do the same! Here are some of the points we learned as we went along.

Grandfathering

This is the time of the heaviest stress in terms of traffic. It will demand much work, thought, clarification, and education. Once you have survived Phase I, you will indeed become experts on traffic control and accident prevention.

A word of explanation about the word "grandfathering" or as many insist "grandpersoning" as we applied it to certification in New York. We set a requirement for knowledge of a "core curiculum of child care" and indicated that this could have been accquired either by formal education or in-service training. We also required three references from persons familiar with the candidates work, including wherever possible, one reference from a Certified Child Care Worker. In addition we required a statement of the candidates philosophy of child care, and a period of satisfactory work in an accredited agency, as indicated by a supervisory evaluation. We also required a job description from the employing agency. This latter point was increasingly important as persons practising in many different types of organizations, carrying a wide and exotic variety of titles, applied for certification as child care workers.

We did not certify everyone who applied, but advised each candidate what was lacking

and gave them time to meet requirements.

Fees and Agencies

We insisted that each individual file their own application and pay the $30 Certification fee themselves. Some agencies who enthusiastically supported the program ask us to "blanket in" all their child care workers, with the agency paying the fee. Members of our committee visited many agencies to explain the criteria and the procedures, and to stress that the decision to apply for certification must come from the individual rather than the employer. Similarly, that the committees decision must come from a case by case review of each candidates qualifications.

Timing

We set a two year deadline for "grandfathering". Later we extended it a further six months. This was for a variety of reasons, including the practical difficulty of reachingall the agencies; or processing the very heavy flow of applications.

Committee Processing

The committee was appointed from different geographic regions in the state. Orriginally it met as a whole, devoting days to the review of applications. As traffic and time demands increased, we mailed packeges to committee members, who reviewed within a seven day turn around time. A simple majority vote was required for approval. A "front sheet" for voting, questioning, or rejecting, enabled members to keep in close touch with one anothers thinking and provided the basis for action by the Chairperson.

As the mailing system worked surprisingly well, the committee continued to meet as a whole but was able to then devote time to appeal cases and planning for the next phases of certification.

Ethics

Individual members of the committee did not rule on the applications of persons known to them, less personal bias enter into the situation. This worked out in most situations because of the widespread geographic composition of the committee.

This worked out satisfactorily except for a few cases where an applicant was well known throughout the state, where the "pass along" was impractical.

Questions received by the committee concearning candidates ethical conduct, misrepresentation of credentials, or similar matters, were refered to the Board of Directors and Ethics Committee for decision.

Recognition

Once a candidate was approved, he/she was so advised by the committee chairperson. The choice of whether to receive the certificate through the mail, or at an Association Conference Award ceremony was made by the individual.

Many chose the public presentation and provided much encouragement and support to others who were awaiting the outcome of their applications. To all, we advocated hangirg the certificate in the work place for others to see.

In addition, the names of all newly certified workers were published in the ACCW "Child Care Review". This is a periodical published quarterly by the New York Association, and available free to members. Agencies pay a yearly subscription and receive recognition by the publication of their name as subscribing agencies.

Another step was taken by the President of ACCW, who communicated with Public Officials, the Board of Directors, and Executive Directors of agencies, encouraging them to recognise their Certified Child Care Workers by financial and/or career promotional opportunities.

This practise continues to the present day and it is encouraging to note that approximately eighty agencies have given this recognition to their workers.

Process Timing

During Phase 1., with hundreds of appllications in various stages of processing, candidates were advised that up to six monthes could elapse before the committee decision. This time frame lessened in Phase 2 and 3.

Upgrading

We required the completion of an Associates program in Child Care, plus experience and other items noted in Phase I, references, evaluations, philosophy, and a college transcript.

Examinations

The Certification Committee worked with the Education Committee. The Child Care Dept. of Dutches County Community College, under the leadership of Dr. Roger Fazzone, produced and trial tested out through its students, two separate three hour examinations for Child Care Workers. The Certification Committee aranged a schedule of sites, dates, and procters for the examinations to be held on a quarterly basis throughout the states. In addition, the Committee aranged Workshops to prepare candidates for the examinations, and provided lists of recommended readings.

Around this time, the Committee also requested the ACCW Board of Directors permission to increase the size of the Certification Committee, and breathed a collective sigh of relief when our numbers increased to twelve persons.

Recertification

Persons registered under "grandfathering" were required to reapply for futher certification every two years, and to produce proof of 30 hours continued training. This could be through college classes, in-service training, or conference workshop attendance which carried continuing education credits (C.E.U.).

While many have complained, and our original intention of having CCCW's increase and upgrade their knowledge in this rapidly developing field was well intentioned, this requirement

for 30 hours continued training was quite controversial. It was also difficult to monitor. A recent Board Decision made recertification automatic with our new membership Fee Structure. An annual membership card indicating that a holder was a Certified member was also developed by the Association several years ago to indicate the member's current status.

Phase III Provisional Certification

Provisional Certification

This was the logical outcome of Phase II. Applicants who were working on degrees, but had not completed them; applicants who had the degree but had yet to complete the experience requirements soon presented themselves to the committee. We now permit Provisional Certification with a time limit of up to four years to candidates who successfully pass the Child Care examination.

Reciprocity

Members of the committee have been actively involved in workshops in various states conferences, as have Board members. Portability of credentials remains of great interest to many Child Care practitioners, and the State Associations working with NOCCWA are proof that this is no idle dream but a real possibility in the years to come.

National Standards

NOCCWA: (National Organization of Child Care Workers Associations, Inc.) under the fine leadership of Bill Moyers (Chairperson, Certification Committee, Ohio) in its Certification and Standard Committee Report of Sept. 81 is vigorously addressing this issue among many others. among many others. Moyers says "It is my hope, and hope of those who participated in the workshop leading to the creation of this paper, that others will volunteer their interest, time and energy to develop those findings to, and the growth and efficiency of, child care certification programs in North America".

And so say all of us! America is long overdue to join the ranks of other countries which have recognized the vital services to children delivered by the child care professional. Will you be one of those people who help us bring that wagon train over the final mountain range into the promised land? I invite each and every one

of you to join us now in this great adventure. Climb aboard. With your help, we will make it.

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